



FIRST PRESS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FRIDAY, JULY 26, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Aug. 4, 9:00 a.m.

Ann Claire Blakely reports on her mission trip to Africa.

Jenni Brown reports on her Oxford University tutorial on C. S. Lewis.

Aug. 6, 1:00 p.m.

Presbytery meets in Delhi, La. and will examine Ryan in the last two areas prior to ordination.

Aug. 11, 9:00 a.m.

Ryan preaches at the Winona Community "Friends of Immanuel" Service held at the old Episcopal Church building.

Aug. 11, 4:00 p.m.

Ryan's installation and ordination service; the ladies are providing a reception following the service.

Sept. 21, 5:00 p.m.

Please join us for a church picnic at the Manse. We also hope to celebrate Mrs. Barnett's birthday.

From the Pastor's Pen...

My wife Ann and I are grateful to be living and working here in Winona. You all have been so hospitable and welcoming to us. We appreciate your patience as we adjust and get settled. We are both overwhelmed by your generosity to us as we get set up in our new home.

I thought for the "first issue" of the newsletter, I would tell you a little bit about us. Ann and I, as I think many of you may know, met in Jackson. Ann is an alumna of Belhaven College and was on the cusp of finishing her degree in Music when we started dat-

ing. We went out on our first date on July 31, 2010 and I proposed on Nov. 20, 2010; ever since that day I have questioned Ann's judgment!

Ann is originally from Portsmouth, Virginia; Portsmouth is near Norfolk and



Williamsburg. We visited her family over the Fourth

of July holiday, which is where this picture was taken.

I am from St. Louis, but I have family all over the eastern US. My parents live in Ohio, my brother is in Med School in New York, and I have grandparents in St. Louis, Chicago, and in Florida.

Currently we have just two dogs, but we look forward to starting our own family here in Winona, and having our children proud to be "Mississippians." Please be in prayer for us and our ministry here among you.

Shorter Catechism Meditation

For centuries, Presbyterians have used the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (WSC) to teach and understand the Christian life as well as to better know the God who has created and redeemed. The Catechism is a basic summary of the Bible's teaching on various topics. Its statements are both profound and simple.

The Catechism has been a superb resource to me as I try to articulate the truths of the Bible. Additionally, its simple summaries of God's word are a great comfort in

time of trial and difficulty. I highly commend it to your regular contemplation.

To help you in your study, each issue I'll write a brief meditation on one of the question and answer sets.

This week, let's consider WSC 1: **What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.**

This question is basically answering the age-old question, "what is the meaning of life?" Faithful Christians understand that our pur-

pose here is not to accumulate stuff or seek personal happiness and prosperity.

As Christians we understand that life is not about merely the "pursuit of happiness." The reason for which we were created is to bring glory to God through worshiping Him, serving Him, and honoring Him in all that we do.

As we glorify God, by His Spirit, we are made all the more able to enjoy Him in this life, and that enjoyment will continue unto eternity.

> 1 Cor. 10.31, Rom 11.36

Visitation

If you would like to have me come visit you, please don't hesitate to call. Also, please feel free to stop by the church office for coffee and visit if you're driving by the church and see a car parked there.

Cat Caffey has just put a new storm-door on the Pastor's Study, so I should be able to see you coming now (I promise not to hide under the desk!).

Most days I'm at the office, but I may be out

visiting, so if you're thinking of stopping in, you may want to call or text me first to make sure I'm there. I hope to see you soon!

Also related to visits, if you know of any of our "shut-ins" or ailing members, please be sure and let me

know. I would hate for someone to be overlooked and not be visited and prayed for while being "laid up."

If you are interested in coming with me to visit some of our members, please call so that we can arrange that. I know that it has been very enjoyable for me these past few weeks, so I'd love to share that time with you.

Please don't be a stranger!



Sunday's Sermon Snapshot

This past Lord's Day, we looked at Ruth 1.18-2.3. As we've been going through Ruth together, I've said that one of the purposes of the "narrative portions" (the stories) of the Bible is to show us first **what saving faith looks like** and second **how God works in our lives and in history**. We've been seeing both of those things very clearly as we've gone through Ruth.

One author notes, "Ruth is not merely about human relationships, but the great covenant-making, and covenant-keeping God and the way in which he brings us to faith." As you see the plot develop and thicken, be on the lookout for our God's "fingerprints" guiding Ruth and Naomi into deeper trust in and experience of His goodness.

On Sunday we considered briefly God's steadfast, covenant love that He has toward His people. The Hebrew word for that concept is "chesed." There is no one English word that translates it, so various translations handle it differently, emphasizing God's kindness or His faithfulness, or His love, etc.

As we looked at the scripture Sunday, we saw that much of Naomi's problem was that she had become mired in a fatalistic outlook that understood God as indeed supremely sovereign, but without any grace. Naomi had sinned, but she didn't see any way of escaping the bitter consequences of her choices.



As we've progressed in Ruth we begin to see how God's purposes are so much deeper than simply "crime and punishment," but that He is actually working all things to bring Naomi to repentance and

experience of His salvation and mercy.

We could almost say that the book of Ruth serves as an exposition of what God's steadfast love does in the lives of two individuals to whom—undeserving though they were—God decided that He would show mercy and bring to a saving knowledge of Himself.

God's love is faithful and sure to those who trust in Him because He gave His own Son to endure the curse and wrath which was deserved by Ruth and Naomi, and us too. Ruth and Naomi were both sinners who disobeyed God's Law, and were entitled to its curse. Paul writes in Gal. 3.13-14, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*"

Only in Christ can we fully understand how God is able to save and give richly to His children.